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September 12, 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Legislative Education Study Committee

**FR:** David Harrell

**RE: STAFF BRIEF: CHILDREN'S CABINET: PROGRESS REPORT**

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The 2006 interim workplan of the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) includes the presentation of a progress report by the Children's Cabinet.

**Issues:**

The 2005 Legislature enacted the *Children's Cabinet Act* (see the Attachment) as a new section of the *Children's Code* to give statutory authorization to the Children's Cabinet, an entity that had been created through executive order.

- Administratively attached to the Office of the Governor, the Children's Cabinet consists of 13 members: the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and 11 cabinet secretaries – the secretaries of Children, Youth and Families; Corrections; Human Services; Labor; Health; Finance and Administration; Economic Development; Public Safety; Aging and Long-term Services; Indian Affairs; and Public Education. The act requires that, each year, either the Governor or the Lieutenant Governor be selected as chairperson.
- In addition to the agencies designated in statute, representatives from the Office of Cultural Affairs, the Department of Taxation and Revenue, and the Office of Workforce Training and Development have been included in the meetings, according to the Director of the Children's Cabinet.

- The fundamental statutory duty of the Children’s Cabinet is to study and make recommendations for the design of a coordinated system to maximize outcomes among children and youth under age 21, particularly those in disadvantaged situations, in certain prescribed areas:
  - physical and mental health fitness;
  - family and community safety and support;
  - preparedness for and success in school;
  - successful transition to meaningful and purposeful adulthood and employment; and
  - valued contributions to and active participation in communities.
- The *Children’s Cabinet Act* requires the cabinet to meet at least six times per year and, at least twice each year, to meet with designated constituencies – among them parents, children, youth, educators, public schools, colleges and universities, representatives of faith-based organizations, the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee, and the LESC – who may assist in the design or implementation of the coordinated system that the act requires.
- In addition, by September 1 of each year the Children’s Cabinet must report and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature, including a child and youth report card about the status and well-being of children and youth and a child and youth policy and inventory budget identifying state programs and initiatives that affect the well-being of children and youth.
- Finally, each member of the cabinet must name an employee to serve as liaison to ensure coordination and communication among departments and agencies.

According to its mission statement, the Children’s Cabinet intends “to ensure that state government at every level is meeting the health, education and growth needs of New Mexico’s children.”

In January 2006, the Children’s Cabinet issued its second report card, *Growing Our Future, Together: 2005 Children’s Report Card*. The next one is expected in January 2007.

- The 2005 report card includes statistics about several specific measures of the community involvement, education, health, support, and safety of youth in New Mexico, in some cases compared with the rest of the nation.
- Under safety, for example, the report card addresses the measure of youth who seriously considered suicide. According to this report, approximately 20 percent of New Mexico high school age students seriously considered suicide in 2003, compared with approximately 17 percent nationwide. The report also says that, for completed suicide, New Mexico ranks fourth highest in the nation.

Finally, since its creation, the Children's Cabinet has met monthly in the Governor's Cabinet Room in the State Capitol and has held four town halls in other places: Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Roswell, and Santa Fe.

### **Background:**

In February 2003, Governor Bill Richardson issued an executive order creating the Children's Cabinet, with the Lieutenant Governor as Chair and membership the same as currently prescribed in law, except for representation from the Department of Indian Affairs. The goals and meeting requirements were also similar to those now prescribed in law.

At a conference in early October 2004, the Lieutenant Governor announced the administration's plan to have the Children's Cabinet institutionalized through statute. Doing so, the Lieutenant Governor said, would help the Children's Cabinet become what it should be: the umbrella agency for all child-related issues. On that point, the analysis of SB 435 (the *Children's Cabinet Act*) by the Public Education Department suggested that the Children's Cabinet may be the most effective way to align systems and improve state services for children and youth.

According to the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, governors' children's cabinets are collaborative governance structures that seek to promote coordination across state agencies and to improve the well-being of children and families. Typically, they involve senior state officials and a range of state agencies, and several of them include representatives of key stakeholders from the private sector.

In its guide to children's cabinets published in August 2004, the NGA reported that at least 16 states had a children's cabinet and that others were likely to follow. The NGA has not done a follow-up study, but the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reports that Connecticut enacted legislation in 2005 creating the Early Childhood Education Cabinet. The NCSL also reports that at least three other states – Louisiana, Maryland, and Ohio – have made significant changes in their children's cabinets since 2004.

### **Presenters:**

For this presentation, Ms. Claire Dudley, Director, New Mexico Children's Cabinet, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, will review the meetings and other activities of the Children's Cabinet, highlight findings from the child and youth report card, and discuss the status of the coordinated system that the Children's Cabinet is to develop.

**Questions the committee may wish to consider:**

1. In what ways have the operation and effectiveness of the Children's Cabinet changed since its authorization in statute?
2. To what extent has the Children's Cabinet collaborated with or coordinated efforts with other entities that offer or administer programs for children and youth in New Mexico?
3. What initiatives for legislation, if any, is the Children's Cabinet planning to support during the 2007 legislative session?
4. To what extent have community representatives attended or been involved in meetings or other activities of the Children's Cabinet?
5. How familiar are New Mexicans with the activities of the Children's Cabinet?
6. Which initiatives of the Children's Cabinet support student performance in public schools?

**ARTICLE 22**  
**Children's Cabinet Act**

Section

- 32A-22-1 Short title.
- 32A-22-2 Children's cabinet created.
- 32A-22-3 Powers; duties; goals.
- 32A-22-4 Children's cabinet department liaisons.

**32A-22-1. Short title.**

This act may be cited as the "Children's Cabinet Act".

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 1.

**Effective dates.** — Laws 2005, ch. 64 contains no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, is effective June 17, 2005, 90 days after adjournment of the legislature.

**32A-22-2. Children's cabinet created.**

A. The children's cabinet is created and is administratively attached to the office of the governor. The children's cabinet shall meet at least six times each year.

B. The children's cabinet shall consist of the following members:

- (1) the governor;
- (2) the lieutenant governor;
- (3) the secretary of children, youth and families;
- (4) the secretary of corrections;
- (5) the secretary of human services;
- (6) the secretary of labor;
- (7) the secretary of health;
- (8) the secretary of finance and administration;
- (9) the secretary of economic development;
- (10) the secretary of public safety;
- (11) the secretary of aging and long-term services;
- (12) the secretary of Indian affairs; and
- (13) the secretary of public education.

C. Each year the children's cabinet shall select the governor or lieutenant governor to be the chairperson.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 2.

**Effective dates.** — Laws 2005, ch. 64 contains no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, is effective June 17, 2005, 90 days after adjournment of the legislature.

### **32A-22-3. Powers; duties; goals.**

A. The children's cabinet shall study and make recommendations for the design of a coordinated system to maximize outcomes among children and youth under age twenty-one, particularly those in disadvantaged situations, in the following areas:

- (1) physical and mental health fitness;
  - (2) family and community safety and support;
  - (3) preparedness for and success in school;
  - (4) successful transition to meaningful and purposeful adulthood and employment;
- and
- (5) valued contributions to and active participation in communities.

B. Departments participating in the children's cabinet may enter into joint powers agreements pursuant to the Children's Cabinet Act [32A-22-1 NMSA 1978].

C. At least twice each year, the children's cabinet shall meet with parents, children, youth, educators, public officials and representatives of faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, public schools and public school districts, colleges and universities, health care providers, nonprofit organizations, youth service providers, political subdivisions, the interim legislative health and human services committee and the legislative education study committee. The children's cabinet may coordinate with these persons as needed to design or implement the coordinated system.

D. By September 1 of each year, the children's cabinet shall report and make recommendations to the governor and the legislature, including:

- (1) a child and youth report card that identifies the status and well-being of children and youth, including special target populations of children and youth that are disproportionately at risk, based on the outcomes in Subsection A of this section; and
- (2) a child and youth policy and inventory budget identifying state programs and initiatives that affect the well-being of children and youth, including proposed budget allocations toward the outcome areas in Subsection A of this section based on age, ethnicity and special target populations as determined by the children's cabinet.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 3.

**Effective dates.** — Laws 2005, ch. 64 contains no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, is effective June 17, 2005, 90 days after adjournment of the legislature.

### **32A-22-4. Children's cabinet department liaisons.**

Each member of the children's cabinet shall name an employee to serve as a liaison to ensure coordination and communication among departments and agencies and to address cross-jurisdictional issues in an efficient, effective and expeditious manner.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 4.

**Effective dates.** — Laws 2005, ch. 64 contains no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, is effective June 17, 2005, 90 days after adjournment of the legislature.

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